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TITLE

METHOD FOR FORMING CONTACT HOLES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates in general to a method for forming contact holes, and more particularly, to a method for forming contact holes for a memory device.

Description of the Related Art:

As semiconductor device geometries continue to decrease 10 in size to provide more devices per fabricated wafer and faster devices, misalignment between each patterned layer is a serious obstacle. Therefore, many self-aligned processes have been developed in order to prevent misalignment and decrease the interval between devices, thereby increasing 15 the device density.

FIGS. 1a to 1d are cross-sections showing a conventional method of forming contact holes for a memory device. First, in FIG. 1a, a silicon substrate 100 is provided. The substrate 100 may contain any semiconductor 20 device, such as MOS transistors and capacitors, used in the memory devices. Here, in order to simplify the diagram, only a flat substrate is depicted. Moreover, the substrate 100 has a memory array region 10 and a peripheral circuit region 20.

25 Next, a plurality of gate structures 109 is formed overlying the memory array region 10 and the peripheral circuit region 20, wherein the gate structure 109 comprises

a gate dielectric layer (not shown), a gate 104, a gate capping layer 106, and a gate spacer 108. The gate dielectric layer may be a silicon oxide layer formed by thermal oxidation. The gate 104 may comprise polysilicon.

5 The gate capping layer 106 and the gate spacer 108 may comprise silicon nitride.

Thereafter, an insulating layer 110, such as a borophosphosilicate glass (BPSG) layer, is formed on the gate structures 109 and fills the gaps therebetween to serve 10 as an interlayer dielectric (ILD) layer. Next, a photoresist layer 114 is coated on the insulating layer 110 and lithography is performed to form openings 117, 119, and 121 therein to expose the insulating layer 110.

Next, in FIG. 1b, the insulating layer 110 under the 15 openings 117, 119, and 121 is etched using the photoresist layer 114 as an etch mask and using the gate capping layers 106, the gate spacers 108, and the substrate 100 as stop layers to simultaneously form bit line contact holes (C_B) 123 on the memory array region 10 to expose the substrate 20 100 and the gate spacers 108 and form substrate contact holes (C_S) 127 and gate contact holes (C_G) 125 on the peripheral circuit region 20 to expose the substrate 100 and the gate capping layers 106, respectively.

Next, in FIG. 1c, after the photoresist layer 114 is 25 removed, a photoresist layer 128 is coated on the insulating layer 110 and fills the bit line contact holes 123, the substrate contact holes 127, and the gate contact holes 125. Next, lithography is performed to remove the photoresist layer 128 in the gate contact holes 125.

Finally, in FIG. 1d, the gate capping layers 106 under the gate contact holes 125 are etched using the remaining photoresist later 128 as an etch mask to expose the gate 104, thereby completing the fabrication of the gate contact 5 holes 125. Thereafter, the remaining photoresist layer 128 is removed.

However, in this method, in order to prevent damaging the gate capping layer 106 and the gate spacer 108 under the bit line contact hole 123 during etching the gate capping 10 layer 106 under the gate contact hole 125, an additional masking layer 128 must be formed by lithography. As a result, the fabrication of contact holes is complicated, increasing fabricating cost. Moreover, misalignment may occur easily when the additional masking layer is formed, 15 reducing device yield.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide a novel method of forming contact holes for a memory device, wherein a protective spacer is formed over the 20 sidewall of the bit line contact hole in the memory device, rather than an additional masking layer when forming gate contact hole, thereby simplifying the fabrication of contact holes to reduce fabricating cost and increase the device yield.

According to the object of the invention, a method of forming contact holes for a memory device is provided. First, a substrate having a memory array region and a peripheral circuit region is provided. A plurality of gate structures is formed overlying the array region and the 25

peripheral circuit region, wherein the gate structure comprises a gate, a gate capping layer, and a gate spacer. Next, a first insulating layer is formed between the gate structures and a second insulating layer is formed on the 5 gate structures and the first insulating layer. Thereafter, the second and first insulating layers are successively etched using the gate capping layers, the gate spacers, and the substrate as stop layers to form bit line contact holes on the memory array region to expose the substrate and the 10 gate spacers and form substrate contact holes and gate contact holes on the peripheral circuit region to expose the substrate and the gate capping layers. Next, a protective spacer is formed over each sidewall of the bit line contact holes, the substrate contact holes, and the gate contact 15 holes. Next, the gate capping layer under each gate contact hole is etched using the protective spacer as a stop layer to expose the gate. Finally, the protective spacers are removed.

In the gate structure, the gate can comprise a metal 20 silicide layer and the gate capping layer and the gate spacer can comprise silicon nitride.

Moreover, the first insulating layer and the second insulating layer can be borophosphosilicate glass (BPSG) and tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS) oxide layer, respectively.

25 Moreover, the protective spacer can be metal nitride with a thickness of about 80 to 200Å. Additionally, the protective spacer can be removed by a mixture of sulfuric acid and hydrogen peroxide (SPM).

Moreover, the gate capping layer can be etched using 30 CH₃F, O₂, and CO as reaction gases.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description given hereinbelow and the accompanying drawings, given by way of illustration only and 5 thus not intended to be limitative of the present invention.

FIGS. 1a to 1d are cross-sections showing a conventional method of forming contact holes for a memory device.

FIGS. 2a to 2g are cross-sections showing a method of 10 forming contact holes for a memory device according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIGS. 2a to 2g are cross-sections showing a method of forming contact holes for a memory device, such as a dynamic 15 random access memory (DRAM), according to the invention.

First, in FIG. 2a, a substrate 200, such as a silicon wafer, is provided. The substrate 200 may contain semiconductor devices, such as MOS transistors and capacitors, used in the memory devices. Here, in order to 20 simplify the diagram, only a flat substrate is depicted. Moreover, the substrate 200 has a memory array region 30 and a peripheral circuit region 40.

Next, a plurality of gate structures 209 is formed overlying the memory array region 30 and the peripheral 25 circuit region 40 by conventional process, wherein the gate structure 209 comprises a gate dielectric layer (not shown), a gate 205, a gate capping layer 206, and a gate spacer 208. The gate dielectric layer may be a silicon oxide layer

formed by thermal oxidation. The gate 205 may be a single polysilicon layer or a composite layer comprising a polysilicon layer and a metal silicide layer thereon. In the invention, for example, the gate 205 is a composite layer comprising a polysilicon layer 202 and a metal silicide layer 204 thereon. The gate capping layer 206 and the gate spacer 208 may comprise silicon nitride, wherein the gate capping layer 206 has a thickness of about 1500 to 1600Å.

10 Thereafter, a first insulating layer 210 is formed on the gate structures 209 and fills the gaps therebetween. In the invention, the first insulating layer 210 can be borophosphosilicate glass (BPSG) formed by chemical vapor deposition (CVD), with a thickness of about 7000 to 8000Å.

15 Next, in FIG. 2b, etching, by such as chemical mechanical polishing (CMP), is performed on the first insulating layer 210 using the gate capping layer 206 as a stop layer to leave a portion of first insulating layer 211 with a thickness of about 6600Å between the gate structures 209. Next, a second insulating layer 212 is subsequently formed on the gate structures 209 and the remaining first insulating layer 211. In the invention, the second insulating layer 212 may be tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS) oxide formed by CVD. Moreover, the second insulating layer 212 has a thickness of about 4500Å. Here, the first and second insulating layers 211 and 212 are used as an interlayer dielectric (ILD) layer. It is noted that the ILD layer may be a single layer composed of the same material as the first insulating layer 210.

Next, a photoresist layer 216 is coated on the second insulating layer 212 for defining patterns. In the invention, a polysilicon layer 214 with a thickness of about 600Å may be optionally formed on the second insulating layer 212 to serve as a hard mask before the photoresist layer 216 is coated thereon. Thereafter, conventional lithography is performed on the photoresist layer 216 to form openings 217, 219, and 221 therein and expose the hard mask 214. The opening 217 is positioned over the first insulating layer 211 between the gate structures 209 on the memory array region 30 and has a width of about 1550 to 1700Å. The opening 219 is positioned over the gate structures 209 on the peripheral circuit region 40 and has a width of about 1550 to 1680Å. The opening 221 is positioned over the first insulating layer 211 between the gate structures 209 on the peripheral circuit region 40 and has a width of about 1550 to 1700Å.

Next, in FIG. 2c, the opening patterns 217, 219, and 221 of the photoresist layer 216 are transferred onto the hard mask 214. Thereafter, the photoresist layer 216 is removed. The second insulating layer 212 and the first insulating layer 211 are successively etched using the hard mask 214 with opening patterns as an etch mask and using the gate capping layers 206, the gate spacers 208, and the substrate 200 as stop layers to simultaneously form bit line contact holes (C_B) 223 on the memory array region 30 to expose the substrate 200 and the gate spacers 208 and form substrate contact holes (C_S) 227 and gate contact holes (C_G) 225 on the peripheral circuit region 40 to expose the substrate 200 and the gate capping layers 206, respectively.

FIGS. 2d to 2e illustrate the critical steps of the invention. In FIG. 2d, a conformable metal nitride layer 228 is formed on the hard mask 214 and the inner surfaces of the bit line contact holes 223, the substrate contact holes 227, and the gate contact holes 225 by conventional deposition, such as CVD. In the invention, the metal nitride layer 228 may comprise titanium nitride and has a thickness of about 80 to 200Å, with 100Å being preferable.

Next, in FIG. 2e, anisotropic etching, such as reactive ion etching (RIE), is performed on the metal nitride layer 228 using, for example, BCl₃, Cl₂, HBr, and N₂ as reaction gases to form protective spacers 229 over the sidewalls of the bit line contact holes 223, the substrate contact holes 227, and the gate contact holes 225, respectively.

Next, in FIG. 2f, the protective spacer 209 comprising titanium nitride can be used as a stop layer during etching of the gate capping layer 206 comprising silicon nitride under the gate contact hole 225 using CH₃F, O₂, CO as reaction gases because of the high etching selectivity of silicon nitride to titanium nitride. After etching, the metal silicide layer 204 of the gate 205 is exposed to complete the fabrication of the gate contact hole 225.

In the invention, since the protective spacer 229 protects the gate capping layer 206 and the gate spacer 208 under the bit line contact hole 223 during etching of the exposed gate capping layer 206 under the gate contact hole 225, there is no need to form an additional photoresist layer in the bit line contact hole 223 and the substrate contact hole 227 to serve as a masking layer, as mentioned in the related art. Additionally, it is noted that although

titanium nitride is used for the protective spacer in the invention, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited thereto. Any material having low etching rate respective to the silicon nitride by a predetermined etchant 5 can be used for the protective spacer according to the invention.

Finally, in FIG. 2g, since the protective spacers 229 can reduce the critical dimension (CD) of the bit line contact hole 223, the substrate contact hole 227, and the 10 gate contact hole 225, the protective spacers 229 require removal prior to formation of the contact plugs. Additionally, since the etch selectivity of the titanium nitride to silicon nitride is about 50:1 by the solution of sulfuric acid and hydrogen peroxide (SPM), the protective 15 spacer 229 in the invention can be removed without damaging the gate capping layer 206 and the gate spacer 208 comprising silicon nitride by SPM solution. In the invention, the SPM solution used has a temperature of about 80 to 120°C, wherein the volumetric ratio of sulfuric acid 20 and hydrogen peroxide is about 4~8:1.

According to the invention, since a protective spacer is formed over the sidewall of the bit line contact hole in the memory device, there is no need to form an additional masking layer before etching the gate capping layer under 25 the gate contact hole. That is, it is not required to perform lithography to form the photoresist masking layer, thereby simplifying the fabrication of contact holes and reducing fabricating cost. Moreover, since there is no requirement to form the masking layer, misalignment is 30 prevented, thereby increasing device yield. Additionally,

the protective spacer in the invention can be removed by SPM solution. Accordingly, the critical dimension of the bit line contact hole is not narrowed.

While the invention has been described by way of example and in terms of the preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments. To the contrary, it is intended to cover various modifications and similar arrangements (as would be apparent to those skilled in the art). Therefore, 10 the scope of the appended claims should be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and similar arrangements.